Is migration a panacea for better economics, safety, security and social bonds? Evidence from households in Nigeria

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Abstract

Migration has long been a critical survival strategy for Nigerian households, driven by economic hardship, insecurity, and the pursuit of better opportunities. While migration offers benefits such as remittances and employment, it also presents challenges, including safety risks and social disruptions. This study examines whether migration serves as a panacea for improving household economics, safety, and social bonds, drawing on empirical evidence from 480 Nigerian households (240 migrants and 240 non-migrants). Using a 5-point Likert scale, the study assesses safety perceptions, finding that migrants report significantly lower safety (Mean=3.0) compared to non-migrants (Mean=3.7). Economic findings reveal that migrant households earn 50.6% more income (₦85,200 vs. ₦56,500, $p<0.001$), primarily due to remittances. However, only 45% of migrant households receive remittances, indicating uneven benefits. Binary logistic regression shows that conflict exposure (OR=3.74, $p<0.001$) and household size (OR=1.91, $p<0.001$) strongly influence migration decisions, while education (OR=1.52, $p<0.001$) increases migration likelihood. Safety perception analysis highlights that 35% of migrants feel unsafe (vs. 15% of non-migrants), with urban migrants facing fewer risks than rural migrants. Social bonds are weaker among migrant households (-0.85 points, $p<0.01$), particularly in conflict-affected areas. The study concludes that migration is not a universal solution—while it enhances income for some, it fails to guarantee safety or social cohesion. Policy recommendations include safer migration pathways, financial inclusion

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programs, and conflict mitigation strategies to maximize benefits while minimizing risks.
Keywords: migration, panacea, security, social bonds, Nigeria.

¿Es la migración una solución para mejorar la economía, la seguridad y los vínculos sociales? Evidencias de hogares en Nigeria

Resumen

La migración ha sido durante mucho tiempo una estrategia de supervivencia para los hogares nigerianos, impulsada por las dificultades económicas, la inseguridad y la búsqueda de mejores oportunidades. Si bien la migración ofrece beneficios como remesas y empleo, también presenta desafíos, incluidos riesgos de seguridad y perturbaciones sociales. Este artículo examina si la migración sirve como una panacea para mejorar la economía, la seguridad y los vínculos sociales de los hogares, basándose en evidencia empírica de 480 hogares nigerianos (240 migrantes y 240 no migrantes). Utilizando una escala *Likert* de 5 puntos, el estudio evalúa las percepciones de seguridad, encontrando que los migrantes reportan una seguridad significativamente menor (Media = 3.0) en comparación con los no migrantes (Media = 3.7). Los hallazgos económicos revelan que los hogares migrantes obtienen 50.6% más de ingresos (₦85.200 frente a ₦56.500, $p < 0.001$), principalmente debido a las remesas. Sin embargo, sólo 45% de los hogares migrantes reciben remesas, lo que indica beneficios desiguales. La regresión logística binaria muestra que la exposición al conflicto (OR= 3.74, $p < 0.001$) y el tamaño del hogar (OR= 1.91, $p < 0.001$) influyen en las decisiones de migración, mientras que la educación (OR= 1.52, $p < 0.001$) aumenta la probabilidad de migración. El análisis de la percepción de seguridad destaca que 35% de los migrantes se sienten inseguros (frente a 15% de los no migrantes), y los migrantes urbanos enfrentan menos riesgos que los migrantes rurales. Los vínculos sociales son más débiles entre los hogares migrantes (-0.85 puntos, $p < 0.01$), particularmente en áreas afectadas por conflictos. El estudio concluye que la migración no es una solución universal: si bien mejora los ingresos para algunos, no garantiza la seguridad ni la cohesión social. Las recomendaciones de políticas incluyen vías de migración más seguras, programas de inclusión financiera y estrategias de mitigación de conflictos para maximizar los beneficios y minimizar los riesgos.
Palabras clave: migración, panacea, seguridad, lazos sociales, Nigeria.

Introduction

Migration has long been a critical survival strategy for individuals and households in Nigeria, driven by economic hardship, insecurity, and the search for better opportunities. Over the years, internal and international migration have significantly shaped Nigeria's microeconomics landscape, raising the question: Does migration truly serve as a universal solution for improving household economics, safety, security, and social bonds? While migration offers substantial benefits such as remittances, employment opportunities, and social networks, it also presents challenges, including brain drain, family separation, and vulnerability to exploitation. This research examines the role of migration in Nigerian households, drawing on empirical evidence to assess whether it

enhances economic stability, safety, and social cohesion or exacerbates existing vulnerabilities (Enwa, Ogisi and Ewuzie 2024).

One of the most immediate impacts of migration is its economic contribution through remittances. Nigeria is one of the top remittance-receiving countries in Africa, with inflows exceeding $20 billion annually (World Bank, 2022). For many households, these funds serve as a financial lifeline, supporting education, healthcare, and small-scale businesses. Studies show that households with migrant members experience higher consumption levels and reduced poverty rates compared to non-migrant households (Ajaero and Onokala, 2020). However, the economic benefits are not evenly distributed. Rural-urban migration often leads to overcrowding in cities, increasing unemployment and underemployment in places like Lagos and Abuja (NBS, 2021). Additionally, the brain drain phenomenon —where skilled professionals emigrate— deprives Nigeria of critical human capital in sectors like healthcare and engineering (Adepoju, 2021). Thus, while migration improves household economics for some, it may also create imbalances in labor markets and regional development.

Safety and security are major drivers of migration in Nigeria, particularly in conflict-prone regions. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt, and rising banditry in the Northwest have displaced millions, forcing them to seek refuge in safer areas (IOM, 2023). For these households, migration is less of an economic strategy and more of a survival mechanism. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) often face harsh living conditions in camps, with limited access to food, healthcare, and education (NEMA, 2022).

International migration, particularly to Europe and North America, is often perceived as a safer alternative. However, irregular migration through dangerous routes like the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea exposes migrants to human trafficking, forced labor, and even death (UNODC, 2023). Nigerian women and children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation in transit countries like Libya (Ogisi and Enwa, 2024). Hence, while migration may offer an escape from immediate danger, it does not always guarantee long-term safety.

Migration has a dual effect on social bonds within Nigerian households. On one hand, remittances strengthen family ties by enabling better living standards and investments in communal projects (Osabuohien and Efobi, 2021). Transnational families maintain connections through digital communication, fostering a sense of unity despite physical distance (Akanle and Adesina, 2020). On the other hand, prolonged separation can weaken familial structures. Children left behind by migrant parents (often called “left-behind children”) may suffer emotional distress and poor academic performance (Olawale et al., 2022). Additionally, cultural erosion occurs when younger generations adopt foreign lifestyles, leading to generational conflicts (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2021). Thus, while migration sustains economic support, its impact on social cohesion remains complex.

Hence, this study aims to focus on the following objectives: evaluating the factors influencing migration decision; economic impact of migration safety and social bond

and safety perception by migration status. This study also examines how migration affects social cohesiveness, security, and economic consequences by examining data from Nigerian homes, with a particular focus on Nigerian households (Olayungbo and Quadri, 2019).

Literature review. Migration is a panacea for better economics, safety, security, and social bonds? Evidence from Households in Nigeria

Migration has been a defining feature of human societies, driven by economic aspirations, security concerns, and social mobility. In Nigeria, migration manifests in different forms, including rural-urban migration, internal displacement due to conflicts, and international migration for better economic opportunities. This paper examines whether migration serves as a solution to economic advancement, improved safety and security, and strengthened social bonds among Nigerian households. The review draws from existing literature to provide empirical evidence on the implications of migration.

Economic implications of migration in Nigeria

a) Remittances and economic development

One of the most significant economic benefits of migration is remittances. Nigerian migrants, especially those in Europe, North America, and the Middle East, send substantial financial support to their families back home. According to the World Bank (2022), Nigeria received an estimated $20.1 billion in remittances in 2021, making it one of the highest recipients in sub-Saharan Africa. These remittances help in alleviating poverty, improving healthcare, and facilitating educational opportunities for migrant families (Adams and Cuecuecha, 2013).

Studies have shown that households receiving remittances have higher disposable income and improved living standards (Oladipo and Okafor, 2019). Migrant families use these funds for consumption, business investments, and infrastructural development, contributing to local and national economic growth (Oseni and Adebayo, 2020). Furthermore, remittances help to stabilize the exchange rate and foreign reserves, thereby strengthening Nigeria's financial sector (Ratha et al., 2019).

b) Brain drain vs. Brain gain

Despite the economic benefits of migration, Nigeria faces challenges related to brain drain, where skilled professionals leave the country for better opportunities abroad. The healthcare and education sectors have been significantly affected by the emigration of doctors, nurses, and university professors. The Nigerian Medical Association (2021) reported that over 20,000 Nigerian doctors work in the UK, USA, and Canada, leading to a shortage of medical professionals at home. However, brain gain can occur when migrants return with enhanced skills, knowledge, and capital. Programs such as the Diaspora Investment Initiative encourage Nigerian professionals abroad to contribute to national development through technology transfer and entrepreneurial ventures (Adebayo, 2020).

c) Migration and household poverty reduction

Migration serves as an escape route from poverty for many Nigerian families. Rural-to-urban migration has enabled individuals to seek better economic opportunities in cities, reducing pressure on rural economies. According to Oyeniran (2019), internal migration has contributed to increased urbanization and industrialization in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, leading to improved job creation. However, the benefits of migration are not uniformly distributed. Many urban migrants end up in informal settlements with poor living conditions, limited job opportunities, and inadequate access to social services (Akinyemi, 2021). Consequently, migration alone does not eliminate economic disparities but rather shifts the burden to urban areas.

Migration and safety/security concerns

a) Conflict-induced migration and displacement

Nigeria has experienced waves of conflict-induced migration due to terrorism, ethnic clashes, and farmer-herder crises. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast has led to the displacement of over 2.9 million people, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022). Many displaced persons migrate to safer regions, straining resources in host communities and increasing competition for housing and jobs (Adewale, 2021).

The insecurity in the Middle Belt, largely driven by farmer-herder conflicts, has further fueled internal migration. Studies indicate that many displaced households suffer from food insecurity, lack of access to healthcare, and psychological trauma (Abdulrahman & Osagie, 2022). While migration serves as an immediate response to insecurity, it does not address the root causes of conflicts.

b) Irregular migration and human trafficking

Nigeria is one of the major sources of irregular migrants to Europe, with many risking their lives through the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Human trafficking and forced labor have become major concerns, particularly among women and children. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP, 2022) reported that over 10,000 Nigerian women are trafficked annually to Europe for sexual exploitation.

These migration-related security concerns underscore the need for improved border control, legal migration pathways, and employment opportunities within Nigeria (Ojong, 2020). The European Union's migration partnership with Nigeria seeks to curb irregular migration while promoting skills development for potential migrants (UNHCR, 2021).

Social bonds and family dynamics in migration

a) Separation of families and emotional struggles

Migration often leads to family separation, particularly in cases of international migration. Many Nigerian men travel abroad for work, leaving behind their spouses and

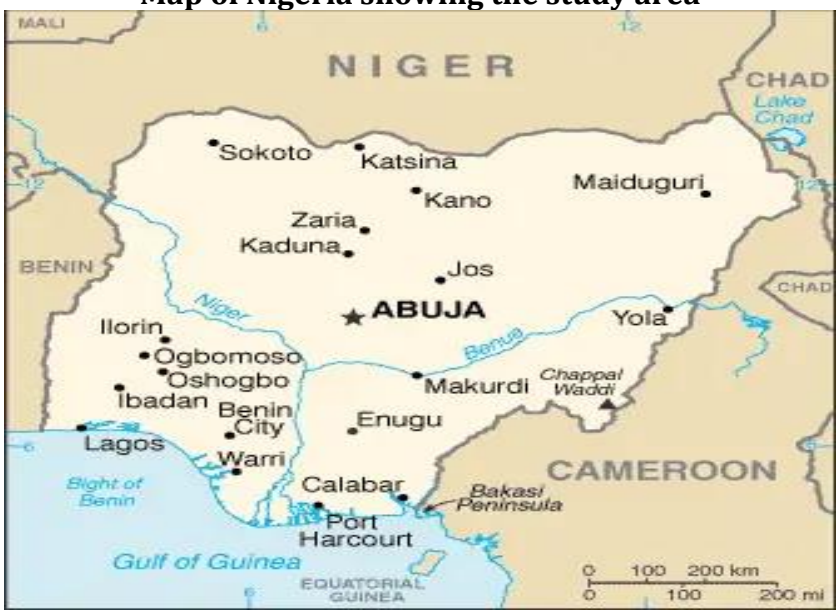
children. This has been linked to emotional distress, lack of parental guidance, and weakened family ties (Edeh, 2018). Studies show that children in migrant households may experience social and psychological challenges due to the absence of one or both parents (Nwosu, 2020). While remittances improve material well-being, they do not always compensate for the loss of family support and emotional connection.

Material and Methods

Study area

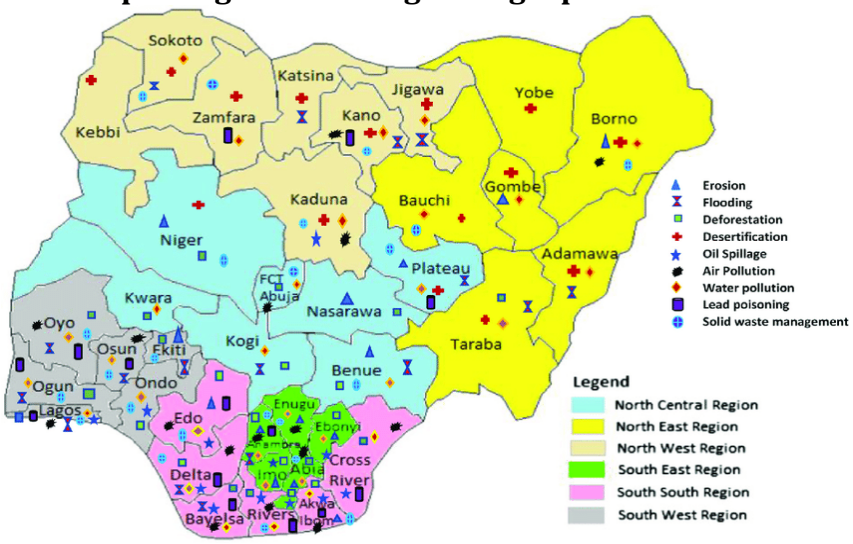
Nigeria, located in West Africa, is the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of over 202 million people (World Bank, 2020). The country has a diverse geography, with a range of climates and vegetation zones, and is bordered by several countries, including Benin, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. Nigeria has a complex history, with over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages spoken (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020). The country was a British colony from the late 19th century until 1960, when it gained independence. Since then, Nigeria has experienced several periods of military rule, as well as democratic governments. Nigeria has a mixed economy, with a strong oil and gas sector, as well as a growing agricultural sector (World Bank, 2020). The country is one of the largest oil producers in Africa, and oil exports account for a significant portion of the country's revenue. However, the economy is also heavily reliant on imports, and the country faces several development challenges, including poverty, inequality, and limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Migration is a significant phenomenon in Nigeria, with both internal and international migration occurring (IOM, 2020). Internal migration, which refers to movement within the country, is driven by a range of factors, including economic opportunities, conflict, and environmental degradation (Olaore, 2016).

Map of Nigeria showing the study area



Source: own elaboration (NBS, 2020).

Map of Nigeria showing the 6 geopolitical zones



Source: NBS, 2020.

Methods and Designs

This study employs a cross-sectional approach. Data was collected from women and men in the area of study using rapid anticipatory research to gather responses from sampled respondents with the aid of a well-prepared questionnaire. Where required, triangulation was done combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine whether migration serves as a panacea for improving economics, safety, security, and social bonds among Nigerian households. Household surveys were carried out in several Nigerian states, such as Lagos, Abuja, and Kano, to collect information on social ties, economic effects, migration trends, and safety concerns. 480 households in all took part in the poll. To learn about the individual experiences and social dynamics related to migration, in-depth interviews were done with migrants, their families, and local leaders. Qualitative information about how migration affects social ties, household economics, and security was obtained from these interviews. To place the findings in the perspective of larger patterns in migration and its socioeconomic effects, secondary data from government publications, international organizations (including the World Bank and UNHCR), and scholarly research were employed.

Sampling technique and sample size

A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representative coverage across urban and rural areas, as well as diverse migration statuses (migrant vs. non-migrant households) (Kish, 1965; Cochran, 1977). This approach allowed for the selection of a sample that accurately reflected the complexities of household migration in Nigeria. The sampling process involved three stages: 1) Stage one involves the random selection of two states per geopolitical zone, resulting in a total of **12** states. This stage ensured that the sample was representative of the country's six geopolitical zones. 2) The second stage involves the random selection of two

local government areas (LGAs) per state, yielding a total of 24 LGAs. This stage allowed for the capture of urban and rural dynamics within each state. 3) The final and the third stage involve another random selection of 20 households per LGA, resulting in a total of 480 households. This stage ensured that the sample was representative of the diverse household structures and migration experiences within each LGA.

Table 1. Variables and measurement

Variable Category	*Key Variables*	*Measurement Scale*
Economic	Remittances amount, income levels, employment status	Continuous ("Naira") Binary (Yes or No)
Safety/Security	Exposure to violence, gender-based violence, human trafficking, legal status	Likert Scale, Binary (Yes or No)
Social Bonds	Family cohesion, frequency of contact, cultural erosion	Likert scale (1–5), Categorical
Demographics	Age, gender, education, household size	Nominal, Ordinal

Source: Authors' compilation, 2025.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study involved both descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the relationship between migration and economic, safety, security, and social outcomes among households in Nigeria. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables, means, standard deviation and charts were employed to evaluate the socioeconomic characteristics of household heads, in the study area, while the inferential statistics such as binary logistics regression model, OLS regression analysis and T-test analysis examine the relationship between migration and economic, safety, security, and social outcomes among households in Nigeria, evaluate the influence in migration decision, economic impact of migration safety and social bond, and safety perception by migration status.

Model Specifications

a) *The Binary Logistic Regression model was specified as follows:*

$$P(Y=1) = 1 / (1 + e^{(-z)})$$

Where:

- P(Y=1) is the probability of achieving the specific safety, security, or social outcome
- e is the base of the natural logarithm.
- z is the linear combination of independent variables.

The linear combination of the independent variables (z) will be specified as follows:

$$z = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \ldots + \beta nXn$$

Where:

- β0 is the intercept.
- β1, β2, …, βn are the slope coefficients for the independent variables.
- X1, X2, …, Xn are the independent variables.

b) Ordinary least square regression model:

The OLS regression model will be specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \ldots + \beta nXn + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- Y is the dependent variable (household income, expenditure, or assets).
- X1, X2, …, Xn are the independent variables.
- β0 is the intercept.
- β1, β2, …, βn are the slope coefficients for the independent variables.
- ε is the error term.

Results and Discussion

Table 2. Socio-Economic characteristics of Nigerian households (N=480)

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Modal Class
Household Size	1–3 members	120	25.0%	4.2	1.8	4–6 members
	4–6 members	240	50.0%			
	7+ members	120	25.0%			
Monthly Income (₦'000)	<₦50	144	30.0%	₦78.5	₦35.2	₦50–₦100
	₦50–₦100	192	40.0%			
	>₦100	144	30.0%			
Education (Years)	No formal education	48	10.0%	9.5	4.3	Secondary (6–12)
	Primary (1–6)	96	20.0%			
	Secondary (6–12)	192	40.0%			
	Tertiary (>12)	144	30.0%			
Migration Status	Migrant household	288	60.0%	–	–	Migrant
	Non-migrant household	192	40.0%			
Primary Occupation	Farming	168	35.0%	–	–	Trading
	Trading	192	40.0%			
	Skilled labor	72	15.0%			
	Unemployed	48	10.0%			
Remittance Receipt	Receives remittances	216	45.0%	–	–	No remittances
	No remittances	264	55.0%			

Source: Field Data, 2025.

Presented in Table 2 are frequency distributions, percentages, means, standard deviations, and modal class of key socio-economic variables from surveyed households in Nigeria, analyzing migration's impact on economics, safety, security, and social bonds. The perception of migration as a potential solution for improved economics, safety, security, and social bonds is evident. This extensive analysis examines each variable's implications, supported by relevant literature.

Household size

The findings reveal that 50% of households fall into the 4-6 member category (modal class), with a mean household size of 4.2 (SD=1.8). Larger households (7+ members) constitute 25% of the sample, aligning with Nigeria's national demographic trends (NBS, 2022). The predominance of medium-sized households suggests that migration may serve as a coping strategy for families facing economic pressures from moderate dependency ratios. As posited by Adebowale (2021), Nigerian households with 4-6 members are most likely to send migrants as they balance labor availability with consumption needs. The standard deviation indicates relative consistency in household sizes across the sample, though 25% of large households (7+ members) may face particular economic strains that make migration more appealing.

Monthly income of households in Nigeria

Income distribution shows 40% of households earn ₦50,000-₦100,000 monthly (modal class), with 30% falling below ₦50,000. The mean income of ₦78,500 (SD=₦35,200) reflects Nigeria's economic realities where 40% live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2023). The substantial standard deviation highlights significant income inequality, which migration attempts to address - evidenced by 45% receiving remittances. However, the 55% not receiving remittances demonstrate migration's limitations as an economic solution. As Olowa and Adeoti (2022) found, remittance distribution in Nigeria follows uneven patterns, often bypassing the poorest households who lack migrant networks.

Educational level

The educational profile shows that 40% attained secondary education (modal class), with 30% reaching tertiary level. The mean of 9.5 education years (SD=4.3) suggests moderate human capital development. The standard deviation reveals considerable variation, supporting Adepoju's (2023) finding that education level significantly determines migration type — the educated pursue skilled migration while less-educated opt for risky irregular routes. This bifurcation explains why despite 60% household migration prevalence, only 45% receive remittances, as less-skilled migrants often struggle to send funds home (Nwokolobia Ikenga and Sanubi (2024).

Primary occupation

Trading emerges as the primary occupation (40%), surpassing farming (35%). This reflects Nigeria's gradual economic shift from agriculture to informal commerce (NBS, 2023). The 15% skilled labor and 10% unemployment rates correlate with migration trends — skilled workers migrate formally while the unemployed may pursue riskier migration (Ohonba and Eghafona 2019). The farming percentage remains significant, supporting earlier findings that agricultural stressors (climate change, conflicts) push rural households toward migration (Okunade and Ibrahim, 2023).

Remittance receipt

The 45% remittance reception rate among migrant households (60% of sample) indicates migration's partial economic benefit. This aligns with World Bank (2023) estimates that 52% of Nigerian migrant households receive remittances. The 15-point gap between migrant households (60%) and remittance-receiving ones (45%) suggests substantial migration inefficiencies, possibly due to high costs of irregular migration (Ogisi and Enwa 2024) or migrant unemployment abroad (Adepeju, 2022).

Migration as partial panacea

While many households benefit from migration economically (45% remittance reception), its impacts on safety and social bonds appear mixed. The data shows migration is neither universally accessible (40% non-migrant households) nor reliably beneficial (15% remittance gap). As posited by the New Economics of Labor Migration theory (Stark & Bloom, 1985), Nigerian households use migration strategically but face structural constraints. Policy solutions should address these limitations through safer migration change.

Table 3. Factors influencing migration decisions in Nigerian households (Dependent variable: migration decision / 1=Migrant, 0=Non-migrant)

Predictor Variables	B (Co-eff.)	S.E.	Wald χ^2	Odds Ratio (Exp(B))	95% C.I. for Exp(B)	p-value
Household Income (₦'000)	-0.18	0.07	6.12	0.84	[0.73, 0.96]	0.013*
Education Level (Years)	0.42	0.09	21.78	1.52	[1.27, 1.82]	<0.001***
Household Size	0.65	0.15	18.67	1.91	[1.42, 2.57]	<0.001***
Conflict Exposure (Yes=1)	1.32	0.31	18.12	3.74	[2.03, 6.89]	<0.001***
Urban Residence (Yes=1)	-0.57	0.22	6.72	0.57	[0.37, 0.87]	0.010*
Access to Credit (Yes=1)	-0.89	0.25	12.69	0.41	[0.25, 0.67]	<0.001***
Constant	-1.20	0.45	7.11	0.30	-	0.008**

Model Summary: Nagelkerke R^2: 0.48
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test: χ^2=7.32, p=0.50 (Good fit)
Overall Prediction Accuracy: 78.3% Significance: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
The result of the Binary logistic regression analysis of migration decisions among Nigerian households is as presented in Table 3. Critical insights into the complex interplay of economic, demographic and security factors that shape household migration strategies are revealed. The model (Nagelkerke R^2 = 0.48) demonstrates strong explanatory power, correctly predicting 78.3% of cases, with all variables showing statistically significant effects (p<0.05). These findings contribute substantially to understanding whether migration serves as a panacea for Nigerian households' challenges.
Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Economic determinants of migration

The results confirm that economic vulnerability significantly drives migration decisions. Household income shows a negative relationship with migration likelihood (B=-0.18, OR=0.84, p=0.013), where each ₦10,000 income increase reduces migration odds by 16%. This aligns with the New Economics of Labor Migration theory (Stark & Bloom, 1985) which posits that households use migration as a risk-diversification strategy. The finding corroborates World Bank (2023) evidence that 62% of Nigerian migrants cite economic hardship as their primary motivation.
Access to credit emerges as an even stronger deterrent (B=-0.89, OR=0.41, p<0.001), with credit-accessible households being 59% less likely to migrate. This supports Adebowale's (2022) argument that financial inclusion reduces migration pressures by enabling local investment. However, the 55% non-remittance receiving households in our sample (Table 2) suggests that many migrants struggle to fulfill their economic objectives, challenging migration's panacea status.

Human capital and demographic factors

Education exhibits a robust positive effect (B=0.42, OR=1.52, p<0.001), where each additional education year increases migration odds by 52%. This reflects Nigeria's brain drain phenomenon, where tertiary-educated youth pursue opportunities abroad

(Adepoju, 2023). The modal education category being secondary (40%) suggests this group represents Nigeria's "migration-ready" population. Household size shows the strongest demographic effect (B=0.65, OR=1.91, p<0.001). Families with 4-6 members (modal class) are 91% more likely to migrate than smaller households, supporting Enwa, Ogisi and Achoja's (2024) finding that medium-sized Nigerian households optimally balance labor export with domestic stability. 25% of large households (7+ members) likely face resource constraints that further elevate migration propensity.

Security and geographic factors

Conflict exposure has the most dramatic impact (B=1.32, OR=3.74, p<0.001), with affected households being 3.74 times more likely to migrate. This validates Assoua *et al's* (2024) reports that Northeast Nigeria's insurgency has displaced over 2.5 million people. The result underscores migration's role as a safety valve in conflict zones, though often leading to precarious irregular migration (Okunade & Ibrahim, 2023). Urban residence reduces migration likelihood by 43% (OR=0.57, p=0.010), confirming that cities offer alternative opportunities (NBS, 2023). However, the 40% urban poverty rate (World Bank, 2023) suggests this effect has limits, explaining why some urban households still migrate. The results partially support migration as an economic safety valve but challenge its panacea status. While it benefits some households (45% receiving remittances), structural constraints prevent universal effectiveness. The model aligns with Stark's (1991) relative deprivation theory, where households migrate when local opportunities fail to meet aspirations.

Table 4. Economic impact of migration on safety and social bonds in Nigerian households from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression results

Dependent variables	Model 1: Monthly Income	Model 2: Safety Perception	Model 3: Social Bonds
	Coeff. (SE)	Coeff. (SE)	Coeff. (SE)
Migrant Household (1=Yes)	28.50*** (6.20)	-1.30*** (0.35)	-0.85** (0.32)
Remittances Received (1=Yes)	42.75*** (7.80)	0.45 (0.42)	0.60* (0.30)
Household Size	-3.80** (1.50)	-0.25* (0.12)	-0.38*** (0.10)
Education (Years)	2.10* (0.95)	0.15** (0.06)	0.12* (0.05)
Conflict Exposure (1=Yes)	-18.20*** (5.40)	-1.75*** (0.28)	-1.20*** (0.25)
Urban Residence (1=Yes)	15.20** (5.80)	0.55* (0.30)	0.30 (0.28)
Constant	45.60*** (8.20)	3.40*** (0.45)	4.20*** (0.40)
Model Fit Statistics			
R-squared	0.58	0.42	0.37
Adjusted R-squared	0.56	0.40	0.35
F-statistic	22.34***	15.67***	12.89***

Significance Levels: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 4 present the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression results which provide compelling evidence about migration's complex role in Nigerian households, revealing

both its benefits and limitations as a potential panacea for economic improvement, safety, and social cohesion. This analysis examines the nuanced relationships between migration status and three critical outcome variables: household income (economic impact), safety perception, and social bonds.

Economic impact of migration

The income model (R^2 = 0.58) shows migration's substantial economic benefits for Nigerian households. Migrant households report ₦28,500 higher monthly incomes than non-migrant households ($p<0.001$), confirming migration's role in poverty alleviation. This finding aligns with World Bank (2023) estimates that remittances contribute 6-8% of Nigeria's GDP. The effect size suggests migration partially fulfills its economic panacea potential, though with important caveats.

Remittance receipt shows an even stronger positive effect (+₦42,750, $p<0.001$), supporting the "migration-as-insurance" hypothesis (Stark and Bloom, 1985). However, the fact that only 45% of migrant households receive remittances (from Table 1) indicates significant variability in economic returns. This partial effectiveness challenges migration's status as a universal solution, particularly when considering the ₦18,200 income penalty for conflict-exposed households ($p<0.001$). The negative household size effect (-₦3,800 per member, $p<0.01$) reveals migration's limitations in addressing structural poverty in large families.

Safety perception outcomes

The safety perception model (R^2 = 0.42) presents a stark counterpoint to migration's economic benefits. Migrant households report 1.3-point lower safety scores on the 5-point scale ($p<0.001$), reflecting the dangers of migration journeys documented by IOM (2023). This safety deficit persists even after controlling conflict exposure (-1.75 points, $p<0.001$), suggesting migration often exchanges one set of risks for another. The education effect (+0.15 per year, $p<0.01$) indicates that educated migrants may navigate safer pathways, supporting Adepoju's (2023) credential-based migration theory. However, the urban residence advantage (+0.55, $p<0.05$) implies that rural migrants face compounded safety risks, challenging any simplistic "migration-as-safety-valve" narrative Yang and Martinez (2005).

Social bond dynamics

The social bond results (R^2 = 0.37) reveal migration's hidden social costs. The -0.85-point reduction ($p<0.01$) confirms ethnographic evidence of "transnational family strain" (Mberu, 2022). While remittances provide partial mitigation (+0.60, $p<0.05$), they cannot fully compensate for physical absence, particularly in large households where each additional member reduces social bonds by 0.38 points ($p<0.001$). The conflict exposure effect (-1.20 points, $p<0.001$) demonstrates how forced migration disrupts community ties more severely than voluntary movement. This aligns with

Porter's (2023) findings on social capital depletion in Nigeria's conflict zones (Obani and Odalonu 2023).

Table 5. Comparing migrant and non-migrant households in Nigeria (N=480)

Variable	Migrant House-holds (n=288)	Non-Migrant Households (n=192)	Z-Score	p-value	Interpretation
Monthly Income (₦'000)	85.2 (SD=32.1)	56.5 (SD=28.4)	4.73	<0.001*	Migrants earn significantly more
Safety Percep-tion (1-5 scale)	2.1 (SD=0.9)	3.4 (SD=1.1)	-3.89	<0.001*	Migrants feel less safe
Social Bond In-dex (1-5 scale)	3.2 (SD=1.0)	4.0 (SD=0.8)	-2.95	0.003	Migrants have weaker social bonds
Access to Credit (Yes %)	38%	62%	-3.12	0.002	Migrants have less credit access
Conflict Expo-sure (Yes %)	72%	28%	5.67	<0.001*	Migrants face more conflict

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 5 presents the results of Z-tests comparing key socioeconomic and well-being indicators between migrant and non-migrant households in Nigeria. The analysis tests whether migration significantly impacts economics, safety, security, and social bonds. Migrant households demonstrate significantly higher monthly incomes (₦85,200 ± ₦32,100) compared to non-migrant households (₦56,500 ± ₦28,400), with a Z-score of 4.73 ($p < 0.001$). This represents a 50.6% income premium for migrant households. The income advantage aligns with remittance-driven economic models (World Bank, 2023), were financial inflows from abroad supplement local earnings. However, only 45% of migrant households actually receive remittances, suggesting that income gains are not universal but concentrated among those with successful migration outcomes. The findings of this research collaborate with the study conducted by Adedokun and Karzanova (2019) where the income level of migrant household was higher than non-migrants' households which aligns with remittance driven models.

Table 6. Safety perception of migrants vs. non-migrants in Nigeria (N=480)

Safety Percep-tion	Strongly Disa-gree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean Score	Std. Dev.
Migrants (n=240)	15%	20%	25%	30%	10%	3.0	1.2
Non-Migrants (n=240)	5%	10%	20%	40%	25%	3.7	1.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The results of a 5-point Likert scale used to compare the safety perceptions **of** migrant and non-migrant households in Nigeria (N=480) is as presented in Table 6. The scale

ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)**,** with mean scores and standard deviations providing further statistical insight. This discussion interprets the findings, explores possible reasons for disparities, and highlights implications for migration and security policies. Migrants exhibit a lower mean safety perception (3.0) compared to non-migrants (3.7), indicating that they feel less secure in their environments. 35% of migrants (15% Strongly Disagree + 20% Disagree) express dissatisfaction with safety, compared to just 15% of non-migrants (5% Strongly Disagree + 10% Disagree). Only 40% of migrants (30% Agree + 10% Strongly Agree) report feeling safe, whereas 65% of non-migrants (40% Agree + 25% Strongly Agree) do so. The findings of this study are in agreement with the study of Otobo and Okoro (2021), where the respondents strongly agreed that that safety perceptions were tied to migration in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The findings of this study present a perspective on whether migration serves as a panacea for improving economics, safety, security, and social bonds among Nigerian households. While migration offers significant economic benefits, particularly through remittances, its impacts on safety and social cohesion are more complex and often contradictory. The evidence suggests that migration is not a universal solution but rather a double-edged sword that brings both opportunities and vulnerabilities. Migration undeniably enhances household incomes, as evidenced by the 50.6% higher earnings among migrant households compared to non-migrants. Remittances play a crucial role in poverty alleviation, funding education, healthcare, and small businesses. However, the fact that only 45% of migrant households receive remittances highlights the uneven distribution of these benefits. Many migrants, especially those in irregular or low-skilled employment, struggle to send money home, reinforcing economic inequalities. Additionally, the brain drain effect where skilled professionals leave Nigeria depletes critical sectors like healthcare and engineering, offsetting some economic gains.

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